

The museum at Johann Sebastian Bach's birthplace

BACH HOUSE, EISENACH

Life & Work of
Johann Sebastian Bach

• Live music
on historic instruments

• Interactive
sound installationen

MEDIA INFORMATION – for publication

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Bach Through the Mirror of Medicine

A special exhibition in the Bach House, Eisenach, presents the forensically reconstructed face of Bach.

The forensic reconstruction of Bach's face forms the focal point of a new special exhibition at the Bach Museum in Eisenach which opens on 21 March 2008.



*Casting of Bach's skull by Wilhelm His
Bust by Carl Ludwig Seffner, 1894*

As early as 1894, after **Bach's bones had been excavated** from St John's Cemetery in Leipzig, attempts were made to reconstruct Bach's face using skull dimensions. After extensive studies of male corpses, Leipzig anatomist Wilhelm His and sculptor Carl Ludwig Seffner created a bust of Bach. This was then used as a model for the Bach Memorial outside St Thomas' Church in Leipzig, which was unveiled in May 1908. It was the **first medical facial reconstruction** of all time. However, both the bust and the memorial were based strongly on the famous portrait of Bach by Gottlob Haussmann, and among the final conclusions we have that "a Handel would also have fitted nicely".

Today, **forensic anthropology** is a recognised branch of modern medicine. The Bach House in Eisenach has been in contact with the Centre for Anatomy & Human Identification of the **University of Dundee**, Scotland, in order to attempt another reconstruction of Bach's face in the 100th year after the dedication of the Bach Memorial in Leipzig. Anthropologist Dr. Caroline Wilkinson is leading the project. Because Bach's last resting place is not to be disturbed again, the project is based on a bronze casting of the skull made by His and Seffner in 1894, which, along with further sketches, measurements and photographs from the estate of the anatomist, forms part of the Bach House collection. The Bach House in Eisenach, opened in 1907, is the oldest Bach Museum, and is owned by the Neue Bachgesellschaft in Leipzig.

Further themes of the exhibition entitled "Bach Through the Mirror of Medicine" include **Bach's eye operation** by the "knight errant" John Taylor, from the consequences of which Bach died on 28 July 1750, and the **organists' disease** discovered from an examination of Bach's skeleton – an ossification of the tendon inserts at the pelvis and heels caused by early playing of the organ. Objects in the Bach House collection, such as the "Bach glasses" and Bach's "brain" (a cast of the brain pan taken by the anatomist His) are also being displayed for the first time in a long while as part of this exhibition. The special exhibition can be viewed from 21 March 2008 to 9 November 2008 in the Bach House in Eisenach.

Special exhibition "Bach through the mirror of medicine"

from 21 March until 09 November 2008

Bachhaus Eisenach, Frauenplan 21, 99817 Eisenach, Germany

www.bachhaus.de

Location

Frauenplan 21
D-99817 Eisenach
Germany

Opening times:

10 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day

Entrance charge:

6 Euro, conc. 4 Euro

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Neue Bachgesellschaft e.V.
An international association based in
Leipzig, founded in 1900



Registered in the German Govern-
ment's Blue Book as cultural com-
municative site of national significance

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